

**ARIZONA COMMISSION OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**

**Minutes of Thursday, June 11, 2015 from 9:30 A.M. to 11:30 A.M
1700 W. Washington Street, Suite 105 Executive Conference Room, Phoenix, Arizona 85007**

Commission Members Present:

Buddy Rocha (phone)
Dave Castillo (phone)
Francis Bradley
Lucinda Hughes-Juan
Philbert Watahomigie, Sr.
Pliny Draper (phone)

Ex-Officio Officers Present

Dawn Melvin
Dawn Williams (phone)
Don Sneed
Keith Watkins
Courtney Coolidge (Phone)
Michael Allison

Commission Members Absent:

Leah Hubbard
Dan Brooks

Ex-Officio Officers Absent

Mary Huyser

Staff Present:

Kristine Fire Thunder

Members of the Public Present:

Eric Hughes
Shane Burnette, National Relief Charities
Shawn Carlos, CDFI, Tohono O'odham Nation
Jacob Moore, Arizona State University, Tribal Relations
Christopher Carusona, U.S. Department of Interior
Marietta Martin, BUSD, Tohono O'odham Nation
Debbie Manuel, Morning Star Youth Leadership Foundation
Rene White, AZ Department of Juvenile Corrections
Kelli Donley, AZ Department of Health

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 A.M. The roll was called and a quorum was established.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Mr. Bradley to pass items on the consent agenda (minutes of the December 11th and January 8th meetings). The motion was seconded by Ms. Hughes-Juan. Hearing no further discussion, motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION:

A. Suicide Prevention Presentation by Kelli Donley

The Centers for Disease Control data shows more than 40,000 Americans died by suicide in 2014. The data suggests this is more than automobile accidents during the same period. 1,040 Arizonans died by suicide in 2013 according to the latest data. Respectively, suicide on Native American reservations in Arizona is disproportionately high though specific data has been difficult to obtain due to factors such as; Sovereign Nations, privacy concerns and independent monitoring systems. Among children between the ages ten to nineteen who identify as Native American it is the second leading cause of death in Arizona among tribal members. The first

leading cause of death is by accident, though it is suspected some of those deaths are likely suicide. Due to the lack of a suicide note or previous suicidal behavior, they do not fit the specific criteria necessary for the medical examiner to rule them as suicide.

The Department of Health Services does not have access to death certificates until approximately eight weeks after it is issued. This makes potential suicide outbreaks in any given community or area difficult to assess in a timely manner. The State of Arizona is one of few states which prevent contact with the families of the deceased due to privacy laws.

Geographically, it has been determined Western states have a higher rate of suicide. What is known as the “Western Wave” theory consists of gun violence, due to easy accessibility to guns, and research showing higher altitude may be a cause of depression. Risk factors for suicide can be mental illness, substance/alcohol abuse, hopelessness, aggressive behavior, physical illness, family history of suicide, financial stress, and loss of a relationship. Other risks which should be carefully noted are access to lethal means, clusters of suicide around them, lack of access to healthcare, cultural beliefs that suicide is notable, has attempted suicide in the past, or has a family history of mental illness.

It is important to recognize signs such as making mention of wanting to die or giving up on life. They may speak of feeling helpless or trapped in a situation; suddenly become isolated and not to talk to their friends. Some may change drinking habits and/or use drugs, a change in behavior which notably shows in their daily life. It is too often a person will not ask for help, or know to ask for help. Significant signs of a person who may be in danger of suicide will have significant changes in sleep patterns, appear constantly anxious, may seem vengeful and have extreme mood swings.

There are several ideas to be applied which will assist in keeping your community aware and proactive regarding suicidal behavior. Reach out to teachers and clergy for resources in your area. Create community groups such as knitting circles, prayer circles, or scouting groups. If you are looking for additional ideas as to what you can do to reduce the stigmas around the discussion of suicide, don't be afraid to speak up when you see a person in danger. Promote conversation about suicide prevention, depression, and mental illness during your activity in the community.

B. Results of Indian Education Summit by Jacob Moore, AVP, Tribal Relations, ASU

The Tribal Leaders/Education Leaders Gathering was held a year ago last March and produced results that were helpful in identifying policy priorities for Indian education in the State of Arizona.

Introduction - At this time the State Board of Education does not currently have an active American Indian board member and it is important to ensure equitable representation. Additionally, we need to anticipate the new education reforms (Common Core) and how tribes can be prepared to handle these higher standards within their schools and communities. Creating relevancy for American Indian students by embedding native language and culture into the curriculum will make the standards more appropriate for tribal communities and increase the potential for student success - based on current Indian education research literature.

The purpose of the Tribal Leaders/Education Leaders Gathering was to orient tribes to the roll-out of the higher academic standards and the potential adverse impacts on their children, along with an orientation of the current state of K-12 Indian education.

A preliminary report, "Rigor and Relevance in Indian Education: A Pathway to Strengthening Communities" was developed in advance and was used as an orientation document and framework for the discussions at the Gathering. The report contains key issues regarding American Indian K-12 students on and off the reservation. Topics include in part; Education Reforms (Common Core), Language and Culture Into Curriculum, Juvenile Justice, Parent and Community Involvement, Workforce Development and Education, and Connecting Tribal Governments to Educational Systems (state/tribal relations).

A letter of invitation was sent to the 22 tribes within the state of Arizona and encouraged them to bring a five-person interdisciplinary strategy team to the Gathering. Fourteen tribes participated. The Gathering used large and small breakout sessions, where the tribal interdisciplinary teams could come together and share information on education challenges and what was working in their respective communities.

On the second day, tribal teams were encouraged to develop their own community-based education strategies based on the state-wide education reform information presented and discussions with other tribal communities. The results of the tribal-level education strategies were captured and recorded in an event proceedings report (available through the project host; Inter Tribal Council of Arizona).

The findings include the need for additional capacity in education leadership, additional culturally sensitive teachers/counselors/administrators, the establishment of effective information sharing and coordination of available resources through a clearinghouse.

The call to action is to build the necessary support to protect our vulnerable American Indian student population and to ensure all of our children have the same opportunity as any other child in the state to get a high quality education. Lastly, a call to continue to educate our tribal leaders on the new reforms and how they have an important role in the implementation of the new reforms in a way that can benefit their children, schools, and communities.

The next steps will be to have the State Board of Education develop a tribal consultation process and reaffirm their Indian Education policy statement. This policy vetting process is currently in process and a potential pilot project based on the outcomes of the Gathering is in discussion with a possible sponsor. The Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs was a sponsor of this event and Mr. Moore thanked them for their support.

B. Native Youth Know Update by Shane Burnette

There are five projects Mr. Burnette updated the commission on, the first being the Miss Pascua Yaqui project. Her proposal was to have the elders teach the youth about ancestral diets and fruits. She suggested they plant a community garden using the language and culture of their people as the foundation. They have had two workshops and in that time established the garden itself. The next step will be to begin learning the culture, Miss Pascua Yaqui has invited youth from sixth grade to high school to participate in these workshops. She also had a new group of younger girls show interest and her program continues to grow. In August there will be a women's conference where female community and business leaders have been invited to speak to the young women about how they became successful and mentor the group.

The second project is the Pascua Yaqui Reservation in Guadalupe, the Lutu'uria Youth Group are collaborating with college students from Yonokame Group to address issues rooted in historical trauma and loss of culture. They want the youth to learn the culture and language, to teach the importance of identifying with the tribe and culture. The group meets every two months with elders and community members come and talk with them about their ancestry. The youth have written a skit about their creation story and presented to their community. The success was such they have been invited to perform it at many gatherings. Additionally, they are building a healing tree; it is designed with papier-mâché and will be placed in the tribal office. The community will be able to place concerns on the healing tree so they can communicate and pray for each other.

The third project is the Little Singer Community School; they are on the Navajo Nation comprised of fifth and sixth grade classes. They have renovated a greenhouse; Mr. Burnette was fortunate to visit them and was very impressed with their progress and dedication to the project. This will promote nutritional, environmental and cultural well-being through the development of a sustainable garden. The now seventh graders have continued to mentor the new sixth graders and the project continues to grow in the community. It has grown into other communities and proving to be a great success.

The Hopi Junior and Senior High School student government committed to establishing a park and recreation area to serve youth and adults living in the school's housing complex. They have cleaned the area, set up tables, and planted trees. The next step will be to put in grills and a sand volley ball court. They have planned three phases to construction, National Relief Charities went to visit the first phase which they were directly involved with they found two families enjoying the park already.

Lastly, the Native American Music Fund is a group of teens who felt music is a vehicle to motivate teens in the community. They fundraised \$10,000 to buy musical equipment and found a monthly meeting place to have musicians come teach them how to play instruments, sing, and be comfortable on stage. They hosted three Teens for Music workshops in three Navajo communities, including music lessons and performances from local and known musicians. National Relief Charities is now meeting with them to establish or renew their project to continue on with the good work and success of their achievement.

Mrs. FireThunder added the five projects were awarded \$2000.00 cash and \$1500.00 technical assistance to implement their projects. One of the criteria was the project had to be sustainable and at least one year long for implementation. The Native Youth Know program ties into our ongoing efforts in public safety issues. She referred to the Indian Education Summit report and noted how social impacts were a main factor of issues involving Native American children. Next year the commission will continue to support the Indian Education Summit and we look forward to hearing the next steps for planning. At this time we are focused on Native Youth Know 2.0, it is a continuation of the workshops offered at 2015 Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day. This specific effort is to get the Pai, Apache, and River Tribes to participate in the process. The data we collected in January did not include these tribes and we hope to complete the data by adding these focus groups.

FUTURE MEETING:

Thursday, August 13, 2015 from 9:30 to 11:30 A.M.
1700 W. Washington St. Suite 105, 1st Floor Conference Room

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

Chair and Vice-Chair Elections for Commission

Preparation for 2015 Sunset Review

Annual Reports

Native Youth Know 2.0 Update

2016 Indian Nations and Tribes Legislative Day

Water Use and Drought Planning

Regulation of Marijuana for Washington and Colorado

Back Pack Drive

Interactive Game on Financial Literacy Christopher Carusona (DOI)

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Ms. Melvin from the Arizona office of Tourism collecting applications for the cooperative marketing program, tribes are eligible to apply. It involves marketing of their tourist attractions in digital media, print media. It can be applied for online, the deadline is June 19th.

Governor's Conference on Tourism 22nd of June, Governor's awards. Two tribal entities have been selected and will be awarded at the dinner.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.